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# OBITUARY NOTICE

OF THE LATE

VICE-ADMIRAL SIR CHARLES MALCOLM,

PRESIDENT OF THE ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

Read 12th November 1851.

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THE Ethnological Society had the misfortune to lose its esteemed President just as the last Session closed. Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Malcolm died at Brighton on the 14th of June last, from an attack of paralysis. It was the second attack, and he gradually sank, surviving the shock only four days. There was a period of nearly ten years between the two attacks. He was certainly declining in health and strength for four months before his last illness.

Sir Charles was the youngest son of a Dumfries family, several members of which highly distinguished themselves as warriors, viz. his brother, Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm, G.C.B., who died in 1838; another brother, General Sir John Malcolm, G.C.B., the historian of India, and late envoy to Persia, who died in 1833; and another brother, Sir James Malcolm, K.C.B., Colonel of Marines at the storming of Fort Oswego on Lake Ontario, who died in 1850; and he himself, making four brothers, each of whom was eminent in his own profession.

I am not about to enter upon the details of their glorious career: that you will find written by history in the archives of their country. I shall not even describe the heroic deeds of our late President and loved friend: they are emblazoned on the rolls of fame. My object, in this place, is to speak of him more in connection with the advancement of science, than with the "pomp and circumstance of war."

Sir Charles Malcolm was the tenth child, and youngest son, of George Malcolm, of Burnfoot, Dumfriesshire, Esq., and Margaret Pasley his wife, and she was sister to Admiral Sir

Thomas Pasley, Bart. Sir Charles was born on the 5th of September 1782. In 1795, at thirteen years of age, he embarked as midshipman on board the "Fox," of 32 guns, under the command of his brother Pulteney. In 1802, at the age of twenty, he was promoted to the rank of Post-captain. In 1837 he became a Rear-admiral, and in 1847 a Vice-admiral. His naval services you will find detailed in Byrne's "Naval Biography." He possessed great courage; for when in command of the "Narcissus," he made, on the 30th of October 1807, a desperate attack with four boats on a convoy of thirty sail, near Brest, which was at anchor under cover of several heavy batteries. In order to determine on and make such an attack, our late friend, as regards bravery, must have been composed of the same metal as Howe, and Sidney Smith, and Nelson.

In 1828 Sir Charles Malcolm was appointed to superintend the *Bombay marine*, to which he gave the more appropriate name of *Indian navy*. It was here that he used the influence of his high position to give a scientific direction to the pursuits of the officers of the Indian navy, and encouraged in many ways all those whom he found engaged in advancing geographical and other knowledge. This, you will observe, exhibits in an especial manner the natural character of his mind; for when he entered the naval service the education of the young officer was limited to what is required to navigate his ship, and to work her when alongside an enemy. In the ten years which he held this command, he ordered important and extensive surveys to be made, which were not limited to India, but extended to the north-eastern regions of Africa, as he greatly desired to open the Somali coast to British commercial enterprise. He founded the Bombay Geographical Society, to which he communicated several papers, and exerted himself to promote its success. And when Captain John Betham, of the Indian navy, published his method of obtaining the latitude by observations on the pole-star, he dedicated his work to Sir Charles Malcolm, as a tribute of respect to one who had much promoted science.

Sir Charles Malcolm possessed extensive and accurate knowledge in several departments of science. He manifested

a great desire to gain knowledge, and was most free in communicating what he knew to others. He was an entire stranger to the mean fear of seeing himself surpassed in the acquisition of knowledge. Considering his career of active life from so early an age, we scarcely expect to find him a scientific man in the high sense of that term. He had not the opportunity of distinguishing himself by any lengthened scientific investigation, such as would obtain for him that high position; but he well knew the direction in which inquiry was needed, and was ever ready to point out the means, and aid those who had opportunity for such investigations.

Sir Charles Malcolm returned to England in 1838, and devoted much time to Societies for the advancement of science. He was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, of which he was on the Council. He was a Fellow also of the Royal Asiatic Society, and was also on its Council. Sir Charles Malcolm was one of the earliest Fellows of our Society, and was long its invaluable President. He took a deep interest in Ethnology, and much contributed to the success and prosperity of our Society. He was ever foremost in personal exertion to advance our interest. He did not wait until we were prosperous before he gave us his countenance, but at once joined us, worked with us, and was willing to take any position to advance us. His annual addresses are evidences of his knowledge of Ethnology; and yet his modesty was so great, that, in his own words, he accepted the office of President only "until some one properly qualified could be obtained."

The sterling qualities of Sir Charles Malcolm endeared him to the Fellows of the Society. The Council, however, from greater contact with him, can better appreciate those qualities, and therefore more fully feel the great loss which the Society has sustained. And the Honorary Secretary, with almost daily intercourse, may perhaps be permitted to add, that the deep impression made on him by the kindness and frankness of the lamented Sir Charles Malcolm can never be effaced from his memory.